

/291/

The Economy of the Paez

by

Segundo Bernal Villa

/Page 292 is blank. /

/293/ General observations

433 Products of the soil make up the substantive part of the Páez economy. The Indians are barely familiar with a few manual arts practiced on very rare occasions. Hunting and gathering are quite secondary, and fishing even more so. Livestock-raising, while being an activity worthy of notice for its development, and for being, in addition, the essence of the native conception of wealth, serves more for carrying out disadvantageous barter transactions with the mestizo and white populations than for deriving a profit either in cash or in kind. The Páez economy is thus a direct one, devoid of intermediaries in the functions of production and consumption. The family consumes what it produces. The articles of consumption that are acquired are few. Essentially [439] they are salt, tools, cooking utensils, and clothing. On the other hand, the products that are sold are few: coffee, laurel wax, potatoes, garlic, and coca. It should be noted that the increase in some of these products is of recent date. Páez production merely provisions and seldom leaves a surplus to maintain regular trade. Foresight for times of scarcity exists, but it is neither sufficient nor organized.

221 Working the land conditions the daily activities of the Páez family. It might be said that the vital cycles are subordinated to the agricultural cycles. Basically, the year is divided into the months of the preparation of the soil and the months of the harvest, including the protection of the crops in season. They devote the [166] months that fall between the extremes of this economic cycle to [464] minor manual activities or they emigrate to hire out as day laborers

/293 cont./

221 on the fincas of the "whites" (1). The social life and the re-

[166]
[464]
[192]
[177]
[128]

1. Generic term with which the natives designate all those who observe the norms of western culture, without any distinction as to race. For convenience we have adopted this usage, putting the term in quotation marks.

ligious fiestas are frequent during this period. The work is done /294/ with devotion and perseverance. It is not done in haste, but there is no resting either.

423 Every Páez family has its lands. This is its ambition. The
[123] primary source of its security. Every crag has an owner whose title has been won by the sweat of his brow. Every crag harbors a rancho that shelters a family. Every inch of land is passionately
[571] defended by the native. The disputes stirred up by this fact are not few. In like manner the cabildos are never so zealous as in the defense of the lands of the parcialidad /a territorial division/.
[648] The areas of settlement /areas of colonization by whites/ are spearheads in the very heart of the community. They were established against the full opposition of the natives. On the other hand, the defense of the land and the prevention of contamination by foreign peoples are postulates of the doctrine. The distribution of the houses suggests in advance the profusion of paths and private property.

[464] When they win the scarce land, the distances and difficulties that loom are not important. They are good colonizers, and it is rare that persons who lack land hire themselves out as permanent peons or become tenant farmers on the great haciendas.

[181] They prefer independence above all.

311 To study the economy of the Páez, certain factors of a
133 geographico-physical and cultural nature cannot be overlooked. They are:

1. Thermic levels. The lands now occupied by the Páez of Tierradentro correspond to the thermic levels of cold and temperate. The contour line corresponding to 2,000 meters

/285 cont. /

101 the Ullucos river, since to the south of it were found the Topas,
361 Yaguiváes, and Guanaca. It seems that in the fifteenth century,
[166]
[173] under the rule of the cacique Calambás, the Paez went over the
cordillera and settled in Pitayó, Toribío, and Tacueyó.

162 Dr. José Pérez de Barradas gave a number of 30,000 souls.

[161] The census of 1938 gives a total of 17,578 inhabitants distributed as follows: municipio of Páez (Belalcázar), 13,861; municipio of Inzá, 3,717. The censuses of 1951 give a total of 25,495 inhabitants, with 15,388 in the municipio of Páez and 10,103 in that of Inzá. It is obvious that the census of 1938 was defective, especially with regard to the population of this last municipio.

[177] Of this population, approximately 80 per cent is Indian, acculturated for the most part, except for those of Calderas, Suin, and Chinas, where traditions are strong and their contacts with the white scant, and in addition there is great resistance to living with him.

142 The Paez are of medium height, with light brown skin, dark brown eyes, straight black hair, broad foreheads, rather pronounced cheekbones, pentagonal rather than oval faces,

361 robust constitutions, and rather broad shoulders. Their pueblos

796 consist of a church, a school, the house of the priest and of

342 the cabildo, and a few other houses which are occupied only at the times of religious fiestas; they live in ranchos that are rectangular in plan, with thatched roofs and walls made of tight rows of maize stalks, /286/ located on privately owned land and a considerable distance apart.

291 Dress.--The Paez dress simply. The man wears linen trousers, a poncho tied to the waist with a leather strap and another that falls freely from the shoulders, and a hat which they manufacture themselves with palm or bamboo leaves. The woman wears a wide skirt tied around the waist with a multicolored band preceding the folds made at the back, a poncho similar to the one worn by the men and also tied around

*The cultivation of potatoes on a large scale
/305 cont./ began more*

244
433 or less two decades ago. "From 1925 to 1930 the one who planted the most potatoes was Ezequiel Mulcué, who caused amazement among the people; now the least planted is 20 arrobas," says one informant. Nowadays there are natives who sow up to 200 arrobas in a year, of which only 70 are planted in the "paramo," and they yield better results than the other arrobas planted. Then, we ask, why do the people of Mosoco have their months of hunger?

262
154
[198] The basic product of the Paez diet is maize. It was in the past and it continues to be so in the present. Psychologically, they feel completely satisfied when they have maize for consumption. Its absence causes a sensation of dietary dissatisfaction. Before the era of the potato, the cultivation of maize and wheat predominated.

461
464
166 During the months of July, August, September, and October, the natives have little work. This is why those from Vitoncó, San José, Lame, and Suin go and sign up as peons on the fincas of the "whites" on the other side of the Cordillera (Popayán, Corinto, and even in the Cauca Valley). They return toward the end of the year, when the maize and wheat harvests are drawing near. The natives of Calderas, San Andrés, Santa Rosa, and Togoima go to the fincas of Inzá or La Plata. They return in October when the maize harvests are approaching. It must be said that this labor force is excellent and cheap. And for this reason very much in demand.

The natives of Mosoco have sufficient work in their own country.

Clearings /rozas/

241
433 The term roza is used generically for the extent of land cleared, burned, cleaned, and fenced, ready for planting. It is found on every private property. It has an area of approximately one hectare. Clearings of two or more hectares are rare. An increase in production does not reflect an enlargement of the clearings, but rather their multiplication and the utilization of ever more rugged and /306/ sterile lands. The natives, to

Pasto SC17

THE HIGHLAND TRIBES OF SOUTHERN COLOMBIA¹

By GREGORIO HERNÁNDEZ DE ALBA

INTRODUCTION

Between the *Esmeralda* and *Curá* in Ecuador and the *Quimbaya* in the modern Department of Caldas to the north, the conquistadors, especially Governor Don Sebastián de Belalcázar, found a large number of tribes of different languages and cultures (map 1, No. 24; map 7). These tribes occupied the mountains of the complicated Andean system, the valleys of the many rivers, and the slopes toward the low, jungle lands of southeastern Colombia. Because of the fertility of the soils, the mild climate, which was largely cool and healthy, the rich gold and silver mines, and the situation of the lands between the important Colonial centers of Santa Fé (now Bogotá) and Quito, which they were founding, the conquistadors greatly desired to conquer and pacify the tribes, as the Spanish chroniclers and historians call the extermination of the Indians. Some peoples, like the *Pasto* living in the present Department of Nariño, north of Ecuador, readily submitted to the overlordship of the encomenderos and hacendados, and adopted their customs and beliefs. Others, like the *Andagut*, changed their habitat, and moved down from the region of San Agustín and the headwaters of the Magdalena River eastward to the hot jungles, where they were safe from enslavement. Some, like the *Páez* and *Moguez*, protected by the ruggedness of the Sierras of their territory, resisted the Spaniards and succeeded in large measure in perpetuating their traditions. Others, however, like the *Pijao*, who were seasoned warriors, fought bloodily against the White invaders until they were totally exterminated.

The first historians of the conquest of this part of America² held different opinions on the cultural and linguistic relationships between these tribes. Some claimed that the dialects differed so greatly from one tribe to another as to be mutually unintelligible; others maintained that all the peoples of the Andean area of Colombia had the same cul-

¹ This study was prepared in Washington, D. C., where the Bureau of American Ethnology, of the Smithsonian Institution, the Library of Congress, and the Library of the Pan American Union facilitated my investigation as previously the Government of Colombia, my wife (who was also my companion in field work), and my friends, the *Páez* Indians of Tierradentro, had furthered it.

² Cieza de León, 1532; Aguilón, 1916; Simón, 1823-25; Oviedo y Valdez, 1681-85; Velaasco, 1841-44.